

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 468

September 27, 1995, 10:42 a.m.
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VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS/Homeless Assistance & PHA Funds

SUBJECT: Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1996 . . . H.R. 2099. Bond motion to table the Sarbanes amendment No. 2782.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 52-48

SYNOPSIS: As reported, H.R. 2099, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for (fiscal year) FY 1996, will provide a net of \$80.98 billion in new budget authority, which is \$8.9 billion under the Administration's request, \$1.3 billion more than provided in the House-passed bill, and \$8.9 billion less than provided in FY 1995.

The Sarbanes amendment would increase funding for the Homeless Assistance Grant accounts by \$360 million to \$1.120 billion (which is the amount provided in FY 1995). This \$360 million would not be available for obligation until the last day of FY 1996, and it would remain available until expended. The amendment would also reduce by \$360 million the amount available for section 8 rental housing subsidy contracts, and would require that section 8 project reserves be used to make up the shortfall.

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. Following debate, Senator Bond moved to table the Sarbanes amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

Senators who have proposed this amendment have done so out of a sincere desire to help homeless people. However, the offset they have provided is unacceptable. The Sarbanes amendment would reduce section 8 (for subsidized rental housing) funding by \$360 million, and would require that section 8 project reserves be used to make up the shortfall. A few weeks ago, on the rescission bill, Congress and the Administration carefully assessed the minimum funding needs for the section 8 program, and rescinded \$427 million. Further cuts would jeopardize the financing of rental contracts. Part of the section 8 program includes a reserve fund

(See other side)

YEAS (52)		NAYS (48)		NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (52 or 96%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (2 or 4%)	Democrats (46 or 100%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Jeffords	Akaka	Inouye	
Ashcroft	Hutchison	Specter	Baucus	Johnston	
Bennett	Inhofe		Biden	Kennedy	
Bond	Kassebaum		Bingaman	Kerrey	
Brown	Kempthorne		Boxer	Kerry	
Burns	Kyl		Bradley	Kohl	
Campbell	Lott		Breaux	Lautenberg	
Chafee	Lugar		Bryan	Leahy	
Coats	Mack		Bumpers	Levin	
Cochran	McCain		Byrd	Lieberman	
Cohen	McConnell		Conrad	Mikulski	
Coverdell	Murkowski		Daschle	Moseley-Braun	
Craig	Nickles		Dodd	Moynihan	
D'Amato	Packwood		Dorgan	Murray	
DeWine	Pressler		Exon	Nunn	
Dole	Roth		Feingold	Pell	
Domenici	Santorum		Feinstein	Pryor	
Faircloth	Shelby		Ford	Reid	
Frist	Simpson		Glenn	Robb	
Gorton	Smith		Graham	Rockefeller	
Gramm	Snowe		Harkin	Sarbanes	
Grams	Stevens		Heflin	Simon	
Grassley	Thomas		Hollings	Wellstone	
Gregg	Thompson				
Hatch	Thurmond				
Hatfield	Warner				

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

program, which is contributed to by public housing authorities (PHAs) and the Federal Government. More than half of the current amount in the section 8 reserves is from PHAs. The reserve fund acts to cover unexpected increases in the costs of rental contracts or unexpected decreases in the income levels of tenants. The amount that is held in reserve is not haphazard; it is a reasonable estimate of the amount that may well be needed. Thus, if the reserve fund were raided as proposed by this amendment, those areas that have the greatest need for reserve funds like New York City would have their reserves drawn down. More than half of that draw down would be from PHA funds, not Federal funds. When those reserves were later needed to renew contracts, they would not be available, contracts would not be renewed, and there would be thousands of more homeless people. Our colleagues apparently are aware of this problem, because they have provided that the additional homeless assistance funding would not be available until the last day of this fiscal year. Using the budget gimmick of advance funding, they hope to influence the amount available for homeless assistance next year, and at the same time they hope that some means will be found of not cutting section 8 assistance next year. These hopes are false. Funding is not available. If they can find an acceptable funding source, we will support their efforts. However, promising that starting next year we will take away money from subsidized housing, and thereby increase the number of homeless people, in order to provide more assistance to homeless people, is not a sensible proposal. We therefore urge our colleagues to table the Sarbanes amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

Homeless assistance saves lives and saves money. Two separate Government evaluations of the McKinney homeless assistance programs have demonstrated these two facts. The first study found that formerly homeless people with severe mental illnesses achieved stability at a rate of 83.4 percent in supportive housing. Tenants also cut their hospital inpatient use by 50 percent. The 4-year evaluation concluded that this unique housing "not only will alleviate human suffering, but also will reduce costs for institutionalization and hospitalization. The five projects studied offer proof that the face of homelessness in America can be changed dramatically." The second evaluation found a success rate of 84.5 percent and concluded that supportive housing "provided cost-effective assistance to help families and individuals escape from homelessness."

The cost of providing housing linked to services can be as little as \$10,000 per person per year. That cost is recouped many times over when that person uses clinics instead of emergency rooms, counseling instead of psychiatric hospitalizations, and drug counseling instead of treatment centers. Supportive housing also promotes self-sufficiency through employment and education linkages. Despite these facts, the bill before us will reduce housing assistance by \$360 million from last years level of \$1.12 billion. The Sarbanes amendment would restore this funding.

As an offset, the amendment would use section 8 reserves. We are not happy taking money from these reserves, but we have few choices. The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development has assured us that this amendment would still leave adequate amounts to renew existing contracts, but it is true that it would deplete the reserve funds. We would prefer not to cut funding for either homeless assistance or section 8 reserves, but the funding for homeless assistance is more important. We would be willing to entertain other suggestions for offsets, but if no other suggestions are made, the Sarbanes amendment's proposal is acceptable.

The problem of homelessness in America has been increasing in recent years. People in these desperate circumstances end up using very expensive social services. For much less cost, shelter can be provided. In tight budgetary times, it is even more important that we provide adequate homeless assistance. We therefore urge the adoption of the Sarbanes amendment.